

By Gene Racz

NORTH BRUNSWICK — Two years ago, Rep. Rush Holt, D-N.J., stood on the front lawn of North Brunswick High School to announce that the school would receive about \$45,000 to improve security measures through the federal Community Oriented Policing Services — COPS — program.

On Monday morning, Holt stood in same spot, but for the opposite reason. This time, he visited the township to denounce Congress' latest effort to end the decades-old COPS program — the only federal program that supports community policing efforts.

Holt was joined at Monday's news conference by North Brunswick Mayor Francis "Mac" Womack, police and educational officials and several students to protest the House of Representatives' version of the 2011 Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Act that would end the Community Oriented Policing Services program.

The Secure Our Schools initiative, one of several funded through COPS, supports state and local efforts to improve school safety, including the costs of metal detectors, locks, lighting security assessments and security training.

"Republicans in Congress have proposed a bill to eliminate — not scale back, not trim, not reduce, but completely eliminate — the COPS program," said Holt. "If this bill were to pass into law, North Brunswick would never again receive a single penny to support school safety and community policing."

As of July, more than \$18.1 million in COPS grants have been awarded to law-enforcement agencies in Holt's 12th District, which includes a dozen municipalities in Middlesex County.

Through another Secure Our Schools grant in 2006, North Brunswick was able to install a state-of-the-art camera system in each one of its district schools that allow principals and school

security officials — and police — to monitor student activity.

Part of the grant was used to implement a comprehensive parent/guardian emergency notification system capable of sending alerts to thousands of phone numbers in a matter of minutes. The district also has used Secure Our Schools grants to improve outdoor lighting through the district and install E-ZPass-type security entrance card systems for students.

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